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THE TURKS AND ZIONISM.

The Jews in Turkey are in an altogether different position from the members of other nationalities. In the eyes of the government they do not exist as a separate nation, as for instance the Albanians, Macedonians or Armenians, but as Ottoman citizens of the Jewish religion. In recent years it became fashionable among Zionists to laud the Jews of Turkey as a noble example as the best type of nationalist Jews. The new Hebrew paper "Hamvaser" made its debut with a song of praise of the nationalistic predilection of the Ottoman Jews. Notwithstanding the equal rights which they always enjoyed and the great offices which many of them filled, they have never shown any desire to assimilate with their neighbors. Therefore, great store was laid in the hope of Zionism among the Jews in Turkey. The premise, however, is not true.

It is not long since Zionists were telling a different story. The Sephardim in Turkey were considered a frigidly congealed mass without a spark of Jewish idealism, or national consciousness. The diagnosis was a true one. In no other country have the Jews so easily assimilated as here. The assimilation is two-fold. In his daily life, the Jew has assumed all Turkish customs and amnners. His children, who are educated by the "Alliance," are imbued with modern European ideas derived from French literature. We have thus the curious spectacle of the Turkish Jew being either a Turk or a Frenchman. His Jewishness lies in his religion. If, therefore, there are Jewish questions for the government to consider, they are mainly of a religious character, as for instance the petition of the Chacham Bashi (Chief Rabbi) for a Kosher Kitchen for Jewish soldiers. The demand of the Greeks and the Armenians were of quite a different nature.

They asked for separate regiments for their people, which the government refused, just as they refused the request of the Chief Rabi, for the reason that in no other land does such an institution exist.

The Jewish press in Europe and in America made of it a Jewish question, and saw in it a reactionary step on the part of the Young Turks. They even spoke of the bad impression this refusal would make upon the Turkish Jews. The truth is that the whole matter was without importance. Our people here cared very little one way or another. It may therefore be assumed that there would never have been a Jewish question in Turkey if it were not for Zionism.

It is not secret that the young Turks look with suspicion on the movement. The Jewish Deputies said so distinctly in the interviews they gave to the European press. During the short period he has held office, the Chacham Bashi had occasion to approach the government on a matter which does directly affect his own community. I refer to his negotiations concerning the "red tickets" which Jewish immigrants to Palestine receive on landing, as an indication that they are not allowed to stay more than three months in the land. It is well known here that it was due to external influence that the Chief Rabi took up the subject. Of interest, however, is the reply he received from the Minister for Home Affairs.

"The red ticket," said Talaat Bey, "is aimed against the immigration en masse to Palestine of foreign Jews—of Jews from Russia and Roumania. Ottoman Jews are perfectly free to come to Palestine, to buy land and to settle there. The abolition of the 'red ticket' will serve as a signal for a great stream of Jewish immigrants, a thing undesirable. Palestine is too small a country. Then there are the

aspirations of Zionism. * * *

These few words, spoken by one of the most important members of the Young Turks' Committee, are of great significance. There is no doubt that Talaat Bey made the statement on behalf of his party, the majority of the members of Parliament.

All this, however, does not prevent the Zionists from continuing their propaganda in the Metropolis. They publish here three weekly papers—"L'Aurore," in French; "El Judio," in Spanish; and "Hamvaser," in Hebrew. Besides, the daily paper, "Jeune Turk," published in the interest of the Ottoman Fatherland, and edited by Gelal Nauri, is also a Zionist publication. It must be confessed that all these papers have at present very little influence. They make a noise, however, and if the question of Zionism has not as yet penetrated official circles it is because the Young Turks have their own affairs to look to.

But it is certain that the government is watching all that is going on in the Zionist camp. Recently a fiery discussion arose between the local Zionist organs and the "Tiempo," an influential Spanish-Jewish paper which stands in close relationship to the local community. The editor attacked Zionists and the movement most bitterly in a series of articles. The Zionists replied in the same spirit and revealed the fact that the writer was for a long time in receipt of a monthly salary from the Zionist fund to write favorably on Zionism, and it was only when he was refused an increase of salary that he started the campaign. Thus the fight increased in venom and ferocity.

The writer, M. David Fresco, had all his articles translated into French and published them in the form of a pamphlet. The Chacham Bashi recently appealed to the four Jewish Deputies in the Chamber to call a conference and decide what at-